MAN's Dignity and Duty

as a reaſonable Creature;

And his Inſufficiency as a fallen Creature:

REPRESENTED IN A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

Anniverſary DUDLEIAN Lecture,

IN THE

Chappel of Harvard-College in *Cambridge*,

MAY 11. 1763.

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IN homine optimum quid eſt? Ratio: hac antecedit animalia, Deos ſequitur. Ratio ergo perfecta, proprium hominis bonum eſt: cætera illi cum animalibus ſatiſq; communia ſunt.

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MAN's Dignity and Duty as a reaſonable Creature, and his Inſufficiency as a fallen Creature.

JOB xxxv. 10, 11.

BUT none ſaith, Where is God my maker, who giveth ſongs in the night? Who teacheth us more than the beaſts of the earth, and maketh us wiſer than the fowls of heaven.

THE ſubject that lies before me to be treated of, according to the method directed to, by the late honourable, learned, and pious Founder of this lecture, is that of *Natural Religion*. And that which is commonly ſo called (tho' variouſly defined by learned men) I apprehend to conſiſt in ſuch laws, or rules of moral conduct, as are founded on deductions from principles of meer natural reaſon relative to *divinity* and *morality*, without the aids of any ſupernatural revelation. This is natural religion in theory. The practice of it conſiſts in the due obſervance of thoſe rules.

IT is the excellency of natural religion, that it hath it's foundation in the rational nature of man, and is therefore ſtable, fixed, and indiſpenſable, and no more capable of variation or change, than the reaſon of man, and the relation he bears to his Maker, as his creature, ſubject, and ſervant; it is fundamental to all civil order, the welfare of ſociety, and laws of government, all the laws and precepts of it being conſonant to eternal truth and equity.

NEVERTHELESS, if we conſider it, with reſpect to the great end of all religion, the guiding men to God as their ultimate, ſupream happineſs, it muſt be confeſs'd, that the meer religion of nature, which was calculated for a ſtate of innocent, uncorrupt nature, and could ſerve to this end only in ſuch a ſtate, is now, in the preſent degenerate ſtate of mankind, in many reſpects defective, and inſufficient to conduct him to his great end; and needs the ſupply of ſuch helps, means and advantages, as the ſcripture-revelation furniſhes us with.

YET the preaching of natural religion is highly uſeful to a chriſtian aſſembly, in reſpect both of it's excellencies, and deficiencies. In the former reſpect,——as it is adopted into the chriſtian ſyſtem, and makes a conſiderable part of it, even the whole of chriſtian morality; and it is for the honour and commendation of our holy *chriſtian* religion above all other religions in the world, that it is allowed to be the higheſt and beſt improvement of the religion of nature,

as

as it comprehends and injoins the precepts of the natural law, in the fulleſt extent and perfection, and ſettles the practice of them on right grounds. And in the latter reſpect——(*viz.* of it's *deficiencies*) as it ſhews us how ſeaſonably the chriſtian revelation comes in to our ſuccour, where natural light fails, and how aptly it correſponds to the principles of uncorrupt reaſon, and receives light and confirmation from them; and how happily it falls in with, and crowns, the wiſhes and expectations of nature in the wiſeſt and beſt of men.

'Tis with ſome view to each of theſe, that I propoſe to conſider theſe words of *Elihu* (who is not without reaſon ſuppos'd by ſome to be the inſpired penman of this book of *Job*) who, having obſerved under the providence of almighty God, the many evils, and calamities that mankind groan under, particularly the oppreſſions, and wrongs they meet with from the great and powerful, which cauſe them to cry, and complain; *they cry out* (ſaith he) *by reaſon of the arm of the mighty*: To vindicate the juſtice of divine providence in permitting this, and not appearing immediately for the reſcue of the oppreſſed and injured, he introduces the words I have read; *but none ſaith, Where is God my maker, who giveth ſongs in the night? who teacheth us more than the beaſts of the earth,* &c. which intimate the reaſon, why their complaints and exclamations againſt their oppreſſors were ſo little regarded, to wit, becauſe of their irreligious neglect of God

God in their troubles: they were not ſolicitous to acquaint themſelves with him, nor to apply themſelves to him for relief, as reaſonable creatures ought to have done, whom God has diſtinguiſhed from, and dignified far above the brutes, by enduing them with the noble powers of reaſon and underſtanding, whereby they are capacitated, and therefore obliged to know the God that made them, to pay him homage and ſervice, to reverence his majeſty, and repair to his mercy in their ſtraits and difficulties.

THE words may be conceiv'd as expreſſive both of lamentation and admiration. It is to be lamented, that God ſhould be ſo much forgotten and neglected in this our world, that there ſhould be ſo few, that do ſeriouſly enquire after God our common *maker*, even when urg'd to it by their neceſſities and diſtreſſes, and when he alone is all-ſufficient to adminiſter effectual ſuccour and ſolace to them in the darkeſt *night* of affliction. 'Tis alſo matter of admiration that man, who by the bounty of his creator, is advanc'd to the rank and dignity of an intelligent being, far ſuperior in knowledge and wiſdom to meer ſenſitive animals, the beaſts and fowls, ſhould not yet go beyond thoſe irrationals, in their cries and moans, when pinch'd with hunger, or otherwiſe afflicted with a ſenſe of pain, and not riſe up to any ſuitable acknowledgements of their maker, to a dependance on him, enquiries after him, addreſſes to him, and expectations from him; all which might reaſonably

nably and juſtly be expected from man, in conſideration of his rational capacities. Strange ſtupidity! But not to take any further critical notice of the words, I ſhall, from this general view, make theſe two obſervations, *viz.*

OBSERVATION I. THAT *there is matter of duty expected and required of man purely as he is a reaſonable creature,* whom God hath taught more than the beaſts of the earth, and made wiſer than the fowls of heaven.

OBSERVATION II. THAT *men do yet generally fail in thoſe duties which their own reaſon, if duely attended to, would lead and oblige them to the obſervance of.* None ſaith, Where is God my maker—Tho' this is the main purpoſe for which he has taught them more than the beaſts and fowls, more than to groan and complain under their calamities.

I SHALL endeavour, with as much brevity as I can, to ſpeak to theſe two heads.

I. *THAT there is matter of duty expected and required of man, purely as he is a reaſonable creature.*

THE great creator, in the firſt conſtitution of man's nature, put within him a principle of reaſon and intelligence, whereby he was dignified and exalted far above the brute creation. For *there*

*there is a ſpirit in man, and the inſpiration of the Almighty giveth him underſtanding.** Of him, who is our maker, and *by whom all things were made*, it is ſaid, *that in him was life, and the life was the light of men.*‡ A bright ray of intellectual light deſcended from the fountain-light into the ſoul of man, when *God breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life, and man became a living ſoul.*† And 'tis in reſpect of his reaſonable ſoul, that man only of all the creatures in this lower world, yea, of the whole viſible creation, was made to bear the image of his maker, not only in a perfect holineſs and righteouſneſs, his moral image, but (in that which was fundamental thereto) to carry ſome finite reſemblance of his natural perfections in its ſpirituality, intelligence, liberty of choice and action, ſelf-conſciouſneſs, immortality, and capacity of bleſſedneſs. And in theſe things lies the diſtinguiſhing excellency of man above the beaſts of the earth and the fowls of heaven, by which alſo he is made their lord, and appointed to have the dominion over them.

THE capacities of the rational ſoul of man are vaſt and admirable: It is capable of apprehending things paſt, preſent, and to come; whereas beaſts are intent only on things preſent to ſenſe. It is capable of conceiving and diſcourſing of ſuch things as are abſtracted from ſenſe and matter, of metaphyſical propoſitions, of the nature, and perfections of God, of angels and ſpirits, and of drawing concluſions about them—

* Job xxxii. 8. ‡ John i. 4. † Gen. ii. 7.

them—capable of all arts and ſciences, and of many ſkilful inventions, in which it is divinely inſtructed. † The powers of this rational and intelligent mind of man are of vaſt extent in the knowledge of nature. He is capable of ranſacking the creation, and ſurveying the works of God in the heavens, earth and ſeas, from the greateſt to the leaſt, by the help of *teleſcopes* and *microſcopes*, and of tracing the footſteps and impreſſions of a Deity, in the plain marks diſcernable in them of an infinitely wiſe and deſigning mind, the framer of them all. He is thereby made capable of contemplating the heavenly bodies that roll above us, and of obſerving their beauty, order, poſition, diſtances, motions, influences, and uſes; the harmonies, combinations, and confederacies of nature; the mutual dependencies, and ſubſerviencies of the various creatures among themſelves; all conducing to the good of the univerſe, and ultimately to the creator's glory.

Of this capacity and diſpoſition of the nobler part of man, there are certain ſignatures in the make or compoſition of his bodily part; in that when the reſt of inferior animals are made with a downward look towards the earth, man is made (as the heathen Poet has obſerved *) erect, of a ſublime countenance, and a face toward

 heaven,

† Iſaiah xxviii. 26.

* Pronaq; cum ſpectant animalia cætera terram,
Os homini ſublime dedit, cœlumq; tueri
Juſſit, et erectos ad ſydera tollere vultus. Ovid.

heaven, being deſigned by nature, and aptly diſpoſed to contemplate the heavens, and to aſcend in his contemplations to an inviſible creator, whoſe glory is above the heavens. And tho' there are many things common to man and beaſt, in reſpect of the animal life, which we here live, yet there is a vaſt difference between the ſpirit of the one and the other, which appears eſpecially at death, when (as *Solomon* divinely notes †) *the ſpirit of a beaſt goeth downward to the earth*, but *the ſpirit of man* ſoars above, and aſcends to its native region of ſpirits, agreeably to the ſuperiority of its nature and faculties.

BUT, to come nearer our purpoſe, it is eſpecially, by means of the rational powers of man's ſoul, that he is capable of religion and morality, of the knowledge of the great author of his being, and of preſenting a reaſonable ſervice to him. And herein eſpecially God has taught us *more than the beaſts and fowls*. For tho' there are ſtrange inſtincts in ſome of thoſe animals, that have a reſemblance of reaſon in man, whence ſome have thought there is a lower degree of reaſon pertaining to beaſts; but were this granted, it muſt alſo be confeſſed, that reaſon in man is of a divers kind, as well as tranſcendent in degree, as the inſtances now mentioned of the largeneſs and extent of man's intellectual capacities, do abundantly demonſtrate; [all the reaſoning in beaſts (if it muſt be ſo call'd) being confin'd to ſenſible objects, may equally be reſolved into natural inſtinct] but from all that is obſervable

†Eccleſ. iii. 31.

obſervable in the brute creatures, there appears not the leaſt ſymptom, or ſhadow of any approaches to religion, not the leaſt affinity or reſemblance to the human nature in a religious diſpoſition. And therefore many chuſe to place the ſpecifick difference between man and beaſts, in religion, rather than in reaſon. Beaſts, 'tis evident, have the knowledge of pleaſure and pain, by ſenſe, and are thereby taught to purſue the one, and ſhun the other; but they have no knowledge of virtue and vice, nor of the pleaſure that attends on virtue, nor of the pain that follows vice. This is peculiar to man, who by a ſort of rational inſtinct ſoon diſcerns the difference between moral good and evil, and in ſome caſes previous to all inſtruction and diſcipline; and therefore is a ſubject capable of a moral law, and of government, by rewards and penalties; and conſequently accountable for his actions, good or bad. He has a capacity for improving and enobling his mind by moral virtues, fitting him for agreable converſe in human ſociety; and more than this, a capacity for religious converſe with his Maker, of bearing his moral image in knowledge and holineſs, fitting him for bliſsful communion with him.

Now do not theſe high and noble capacities of man's reaſonable nature infer a moral obligation he is under to proportionable duties? Moſt certainly they do; otherwiſe man would be no more ſubject to blame for not enquiring, *where is God my maker*, than the beaſts themſelves;

which ſufficiently verifies the propoſition I laid down, that man's duty may be argued from his reaſonable nature and capacities, tho' deſtitute of external revelation, (I mean his duty, ſo far as lies within the compaſs of his underſtanding); and this is what I propoſe to ſhew in the further proſecuting this point,—That God has put this principle of intellectual light into the nature of man to diſcover his duty to him, and to direct him in his whole moral behaviour, and alſo given it the force of a law to oblige him to the practice of it ; the ſame which is commonly called the *light and law of nature*, or the light and dictates of conſcience : For conſcience is nothing elſe but the reaſon and judgment of man, as it is peculiarly converſant about his religious and moral acts, in its reflections on paſt actions, and directions of the future, and paſſing judgment on them, as it is ſubject to the judgment of God.

I SHALL therefore endeavour to ſhew, that God has given man reaſon for this two-fold end, 1ſt. to be a light to diſcover his duty to him ; and 2dly, to have the force of a law to bind his duty upon him.

1ſt. REASON is given man for a light to diſcover his duty to him, and to guide him in the practice of it. There is a three-fold object of our moral conduct commonly known. God, our neighbour, and ourſelves ; and the principles of our reaſonable nature dictate our duty towards this three-fold object, and our whole duty as reaſonable creatures may be reduced to theſe three heads, (1.) THERE

(1.) THERE are in our reaſonable nature or (which is the ſame) in the natural law, principles of piety, which dictate our duty towards God. Here, the grand fundamental principle of piety and of all religion, is the knowledge and belief of the exiſtence of a God. This great truth is prior to all revelation; for we muſt firſt believe there is a God, before we can receive any revelation as from him. And this muſt be firſt received by means of rational conviction, or by ſuch proofs as are adapted to the apprehenſion of our reaſon; tho' divine revelation makes them more clear and ſtrong. God hath given abundant demonſtration of his exiſtence to all mankind, to the whole world of rational beings, partly, by the impreſſions of his being and perfections he has left on the hearts and conſciences of men, as the God of nature; partly, by the external manifeſtation of himſelf in his works of creation: And this ſeems the meaning of the apoſtle's word when, ſpeaking of the Gentile world, he tells us, *That which may be known of God* (his being and perfections as an object of worſhip) *is manifeſt in them*, (i. e. by inward impreſſions, or *the law written in their hearts* *) *for God hath ſhewed it to them*; (i. e. by his external works, viſible, eſpecially in the creation of the world,) and thereupon brings in this great evidence of the being of an eternal, almighty God,—*For the inviſible things of him, from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen,*

* Rom. i. 19. and ii. 15.

ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. ‡ The viſible glories of the firmament, the ſun, moon, and ſtars proclaim to all the world the being and glory of that inviſible power which formed them, and preſides over them. *There is no ſpeech or language where their voice is not heard.* ‖ The ſilent language of theſe natural preachers is interpreted and underſtood among all nations to the ends of the earth, by that portion of reaſon which God has imparted to them.— Men are compell'd by the force of meer natural reaſon to acknowledge a firſt cauſe which is eternally ſelf-exiſtent, for nothing is more certain than that ſome being muſt have exiſted from eternity, otherwiſe nothing could ever have been. But to exiſt from eternity is to be ſelf-exiſtent, or to have no cauſe of exiſtence; which is incompatible to every finite being, and can agree only to a being that is infinite. As to the notion of the world, or the matter of it, it's being from eternity, or it's being caſt into the preſent form by an eternal ſucceſſion of cauſes and effects, it is ſo ſhockingly abſurd, that the reaſon of mankind cannot but reject it at firſt ſight. And it is ſcarce to be believed poſſible for the greateſt atheiſt to aſſent to it on clear and ſure grounds. But when we ſay, God is a being ſelf-exiſtent, it is to be underſtood negatively, not as affirming him to be the cauſe of his own exiſtence, but as excluding all other cauſes, and aſſerting him to be a being of ſuch

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‡ Romans i. 20. ‖ Pſalm xix. 1, 2.

a nature, as neceſſarily and eternally to exiſt without any cauſe at all, by the meer prerogative of his own infinite eſſence, in a manner to us, and all finite intelligences inconceivable; for when we arrive at *infinite*, (in ſearching out a firſt cauſe) as by the impulſe of our own reaſon we muſt at laſt, whatever courſe of argument we purſue, there all reaſoning and diſpute muſt ceaſe, and give way to admiration.

We ſay then upon principles of natural reaſon, it is an undoubted concluſion, there is an all-glorious God, the creator and firſt cauſe of all things, being himſelf uncauſed, eternally exiſting, independent, a neceſſary being, ſelf-ſufficient, having all fulneſs of being and perfection conceivable or poſſible in himſelf, abſolutely ſupream in all perfection, in knowledge, wiſdom, holineſs, power, juſtice, goodneſs, and love, every where preſent, converſant with his reaſonable creatures, obſervant of their behaviour, ſuſtaining the relation of a father, governor, and judge to them. For there is this principle of natural light further to be added, which dictates our duty towards God, *viz.* the belief of a divine providence, which inſpects and governs all the affairs of the world, and of mankind eſpecially. And as man is conſtituted a ſubject of moral government, and therefore accountable to his maker, 'tis rational, therefore, to expect, that he will call him to an account for his behaviour, and reward or puniſh him as his deeds require. But theſe great articles of natural religion, being

ing with equal evidence deducible from the perfections of God, I ſhall not further inſiſt upon them.

Now what does reaſon teach us to be our duty towards God, in conſequence of theſe principles, but that we ſhould acknowledge and adore him? that we ſhould love him ſuperlatively, and reverence him in tho't, word and deed; that we ſhould admire and praiſe him, and worſhip him with all the capacities of our ſpirits and bodies; that we ſhould give thanks for the innumerable benefits we receive from him, and live in dependence on him; and have recourſe to him by prayer in all our wants, ſtraits and dangers; and that we ſhould in all things obey his will, notified to us by our natural ſentiments of the diſtinction between moral good and evil, between right and wrong, truth and falſehood, between what is pleaſing and what is diſpleaſing to our maker; that we ſhould place our chief felicity in his favour, and have the greateſt dread of his diſpleaſure; that we ſhould be humble and contented with all his wiſe diſtributions, patient and ſubmiſſive to the orders of his providence, in all the chaſtiſements he lays us under—Theſe, and ſuch like, are the internal acts of religion founded in the relation every reaſonable being ſtands in to his maker, conſidered ſingly, and apart.

But beſides theſe, there are duties of piety owing to God from ſocieties of men, on the grounds of natural reaſon. God is the author and

and founder, the patron and benefactor of human ſocieties; and has, in the formation of our natures, furniſhed us with faculties and organs ſuited to ſocial converſe, and given us an inclination to unite in ſociety for that purpoſe; therefore ſocial worſhip is a dictate of nature. That *it is not good for man to be alone*, is the voice of nature, as well as revelation. God has therefore made us members one of another, ſo as to have need of and dependance on one anothers help for our ſubſiſtance; inſomuch that our natural powers would fail of one end of their creation, unleſs we were thus united in ſociety; and it is a rational dictate that God is to be glorified by all the capacities he has given us. Therefore the joining together to worſhip God by prayer and thankſgiving in families, and public aſſemblies, is a duty founded on the law of nature, as well as the directions of holy ſcripture. But let this ſerve for a brief ſpecimen of the duties of religion we owe to God diſcoverable by natural light.

(2.) THERE are principles of juſtice and charity, proper to man's natural reaſon, that go to make up the law of nature, as it regulates our carriage towards *our neighbour*, which are ſuch as theſe, *viz.* the joint relation we all ſtand in to God, as fellow-ſervants of the ſame Lord, as children of the ſame father, who carries an impartial hand over them all: Which relation requires an upright, juſt, and inoffenſive deportment to-

wards all our fellow men. And the forementioned principle of piety, has place here as a principle of juſtice, *viz.* that mankind is made with capacities for ſociety, and for mutual converſe and aſſiſtance, and that as members of ſocieties we have all ſome ſort of dependence one on another, which is the foundation of all friendly offices, and of all equitable and obliging behaviour towards our fellow members. To this let me add that rational maxim, adopted by our Saviour into his evangelical law, of doing to others what we would they ſhould do to us in like circumſtances, both the law, and the prophets, natural and revealed religion, conſpire to recommend and enforce this maxim, being founded on reaſon and nature. This requires that we ſhould wrong no man in tho't, word, or deed.—Not in *tho't* by wiſhing him ill, coveting what is his, or bearing envy or malice againſt him ;— not in *word* by defamation, reproaches, or bearing falſe witneſs ;— not in *deed* by doing any thing injurious to the perſon, life, eſtate, or reputation of our neighbour, for no man could be willing to be thus dealt with by others. On the contrary, it teaches us to deal juſtly with all, to be upright and honeſt in our commerce, giving to every one his due, to be peaceable, and uſeful, as members of ſocieties, juſt and faithful in the duties of our ſeveral relations, which are founded on natural right.

MOREOVER, All the offices of charity, kindneſs, gratitude, and univerſal benevolence branch out

out from theſe rational principles; that all mankind are equal by nature, as the deſcendants of one common progenitor, and ſo we bear a relation to all men as brethren; and that others have the ſame feelings of humane nature with ourſelves; and that there is implanted in our breaſts a natural ſympathy and affection towards thoſe of our own ſpecies, that prompts us to acts of mercy and kindneſs to them in their indigence and miſery; that we have need one of another, and that we are obliged to do to others, as we would they ſhould do to us, which may be applied as a principle of charity, as well as of juſtice: Hereby we are taught to bear good will to our brethren, and neighbours, to be communicative to their neceſſities, to be friendly, loving and ſociable; for man is naturally diſpoſed and made for this purpoſe. In a word, God has ſo plainly interwoven this diſpoſition to acts of charity, and gratitude to our benefactor, into our nature, that we commonly call it *humanity*, as if it was the diſtinguiſhing property of human nature, and the contrary diſpoſitions and actions we as commonly brand with the note of *inhumanity*, as being ſordid and baſe.

Let me add,

(3.) THERE are alſo in our reaſonable nature principles that lead to ſobriety and temperance in the right government of ourſelves. Theſe are, that as ſubjects and ſervants of our great Creator, and Lord, we ought to preſerve the powers and faculties both of our bodies and

ſouls in a right temper, as fit inſtruments of his ſervice, that as *veſſels unto honour*, we might be always *meet for the maſters uſe* ; which principle is violated by all acts of intemperance. Again, it is a rational principle, agreeable to the primitive order, and conſtitution of nature (according to which reaſon and underſtanding were made to lead and rule, and the will and inferior faculties to obey and follow) that we ſhould keep up the dominion of reaſon over brutal appetites and paſſions, to check and controul them, and not ſuffer them at any time to get the aſcendant in the ſoul, which is as great a diſorder in nature, as that in the ſtate, which *Solomon* complains of, that of *ſervants riding on horſe back, and princes walking as ſervants on the earth.* * All intemperance proceeds from the unrulineſs of the bodily appetites and affections, their tranſgreſſing the bounds of reaſon and moderation, and 'tis the office of temperance, to reſtrain them within thoſe bounds, and to eſtabliſh the authority of reaſon, which it hath by divine right in the ſoul of man, and to ſtrengthen it againſt the uſurpation of ſenſe and appetite. This document of nature (the bringing the body into ſubjection, and not ſuffering it to uſurp the dominion) was obſerv'd by the heathen moraliſt, " *I was born to greater things*, (ſaith *Seneca* †) " *than to become a ſlave to my body.*" Further, there

* Eccl. 7. 10.

† Major ſum, et ad majora genitus, quam ut mancipium ſim mei corporis. SEN. *Epiſt.* LXV.

there are divers maxims of reaſon, by which men ordinarily govern themſelves in their civil affairs, which may be applied to the law of temperance. To mention one or two. 'Tis accounted a maxim of wiſdom, to forego a leſs good, in order to obtain a greater, or to deny ones ſelf in a ſmall matter of pleaſure, or profit, when one has the proſpect of a very great advantage in ſo doing; and for the ſame reaſon, ought we not to quit the pleaſures of ſenſe, in order to the more ſublime, manly pleaſure of wiſdom and virtue? Another, that bears ſome affinity to this is, that we ought to ſubmit to a leſſer evil to avoid a greater, or of two evils to chuſe the leſs, and does not this teach us, it is our wiſdom to ſubmit to the pains of ſelf-denial in laying reſtraints on the ſenſual appetite, and mortifying a luſt, rather than by an unbounded gratification, to incur the loſs of health, eſtate, reputation, and to become expos'd to the ſtings and reproaches of an injured conſcience, which will follow ſuch gratifications: To ſay nothing of a future vengeance. Our bleſſed Saviour has founded many of his wiſe cautions, and admonitions upon ſuch rational maxims: Particularly, that of mortifying a beloved luſt; it is better for thee, ſaith he, *that one of thy members periſh*, than *that thy whole body ſhould be caſt into hell.** By ſuch eaſy and obvious rules, natural reaſon might lead men to diſcern their whole duty, relating to ſelf-government. The principles that have been laid

* Matth. V. 29.

laid down carry their own evidence with them, and need not a train of reaſoning and diſcourſe to beget aſſent, but may be reckoned among the firſt and radical principles of the natural law. And hence we ſee our duty with reſpect to God, our neighbour, and ourſelves, diſcoverable by the clear light of reaſon. Wherefore I proceed now to ſay——

2dly. God has given reaſon to man to have the force of a law to bind his duty upon him. The light whereby reaſon diſcovers man's duty to him, infers an obligation upon him to the practice of it. This will more plainly appear, if we conſider what things are requiſite to give force to a law. There are theſe three things eſpecially. (1.) It muſt be an act of lawful authority in giving commands. (2.) It muſt have a ſanction of juſt rewards and penalties annexed to thoſe commands, to guard them againſt tranſgreſſions. (3.) There muſt be a righteous judge to take an account of the obſervance of them, to acquit or condemn as men ſhall be found on their trial. Theſe are all the requiſites to the binding force of any law, and they all concur in the law of man's reaſonable nature. For,

(1.) Its authority is of divine right. God, who is our rightful lord and lawgiver, has given it this authority, which needs no other proof than his being the author of the law of nature, which is therefore ſaid to be written in the heart of man.† But by whom ſhould it be written there,

† Rom. ii. 15.

there, but by God alone, in the very conſtitution of the nature of man, as endued with reaſon, to be the means or inſtrument of his moral government over him? So that the dictates of reaſon and conſcience, which diſcover and determine what is ſin, and what is duty, are to be regarded as divine laws. Hence the underſtanding reaſonable *ſprit of man*, is called by *Solomon the candle of the Lord.** It is a candle lighted up in every man's ſoul by the author of nature, whoſe inſpiration giveth him underſtanding, to enable him to diſcern between right and wrong, good and evil. This light of nature, therefore, is a divine light, and the authority of its dictates divine. Therefore to obey reaſon is to obey God, who hath dictated his will to us concerning our moral actions, by that reaſon and underſtanding he hath given us, as really as by his written word.

(2.) THESE natural dictates of reaſon have alſo a ſanction.---Thoſe hopes and fears of men's hearts, reſulting from their moral conduct, may be regarded as a natural ſanction to the law of reaſon; as they have a ſenſe of joy or pain that follows on the doing good, or evil; men are naturally conſcious to themſelves of the good or evil conſequences of either acting up to the principles of natural light, or deviating from them. The apoſtle obſerves, that the Gentiles had a conſcience that excuſed, or accuſed on the doing good or evil. ‡ And the natural preſages and fears

* Prov. xx. 27. ‡ Rom. ii. 15.

fears of a vengeance that purſues unrighteous practices, and certain forebodings of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, together with the preſent feelings of conſcience, its comfort and ſatisfaction on well doing, its reproaches, ſtings and remorſes on the commiſſion of evil, ſerve inſtead of more poſitive declarations, to guard the law of nature.

THERE is another paſſion of human nature very painful and diſquieting, conſequent on vice, which may be, and often is, a reſtraint upon men from vicious actions, and that is *ſhame*. After the commiſſion of any vile, or wicked act, men are affected not only with fear in a ſenſe of guilt, but with ſhame in a ſenſe of the turpitude, diſhoneſty, and vileneſs of their behaviour, their having acted an unreaſonable part, unbecoming themſelves, and unſuitably to the dignity and prerogative of their reaſonable nature, which expoſes them to the ſevere reproaches of their own hearts, and ſelf-upbraidings for their folly and baſeneſs, having no rational plea for their juſtification. The nature of man was a ſtranger to this irkſome diſquieting paſſion till ſin enter'd, by which it was debas'd and deſpoiled of its dignity.† And this adds force to the obligation men are under to act becoming the honour of their nature, by a ſtrict conformity to the dictates of right reaſon.

(3.) THE

† Gen. ii. 25.

(3.) THE binding force of theſe principles and dictates of nature do plainly ſuppoſe and require a judge, to whom belongs the execution of the law which is neceſſary to enforce the whole, to whom all men muſt hold themſelves accountable. And the ſame natural light that manifeſts a God that made and rules the world, doth alſo beget a perſuaſion of his being the righteous judge of his reaſonable creatures. There is naturally in all men's hearts an indelible perſuaſion of a governing juſtice, that takes cognizance of the moral actions and behaviour of men, and meaſures out ſuitable puniſhments to men's crimes. One plain evidence of this is the uſe of oaths, ſo frequent and common among all nations, at leaſt among all civilized nations, who diſcover any ſenſe of a God. And in all ſuch oaths there is, in the very nature of them, a ſolemn appeal to an inviſible judge, with an acknowledgment and belief of his taking cognizance of all that paſſes among men, and of his being the patron of truth and innocence, and the righteous avenger of all injuſtice and perjury. And the apoſtle *Paul* teſtifies of thoſe, who were left only to the light of nature, that they *knew the judgment of God*, condemning them to *death* for ſins againſt that light.* And ſince there appears no equal diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments in this life, worthy of the righteous governor of the world, reaſon ſuggeſts that it muſt be expected in a future ſtate. And the

 ſentiments

* Rom. i. 32.

ſentiments and premonitions of conſcience (as an inferior judge) relative hereunto, do confirm this perſuaſion. Nothing more, I think, need be added to evince the binding force of the principles of man's reaſonable nature. So I paſs to ſpeak in a few words to the ſecond obſervation,

II. *THAT men do generally fail in thoſe duties which their own reaſon duly attended to would lead them to the obſervance of.*

If we ſpeak of reaſon in its pure uncorrupt ſtate, in this regard, the propoſition might run in univerſal terms,—*There is none,* (to uſe the language of the text) that do ſeriouſly, ſuitably, and ſufficiently enquire, *Where is God my maker?* All men univerſally are more or leſs defective in their practical compliance with the directions of right reaſon, in reſpect both of their religious and moral conduct, chiefly the former; and if the moſt circumſpect and blameleſs liver, would examine himſelf by this teſt, he would find that in many things he has ſwerved from this rule of conduct. To this the royal preacher bears witneſs, in obſerving, *there is not a juſt man upon earth, that doeth good and ſinneth not.*† But even in this preſent ſtate of frailty, under all the clouds and darkneſs, and the miſts of ignorance and error, that have overſpread and obſcured the human faculties, God ſtill imparts to men much more light and knowledge than the generality of mankind ever reduce into practice. This

candle

† Eccleſ. vii. 20

candle of the Lord (though it ſhines more dimly than when it was firſt lighted up in the ſoul of man, yet) ſtill affords men a great deal of light for regulating their moral and religious conduct, more than they care generally to improve, for men love darkneſs rather than light.

THE fact is notorious and undeniable, it is atteſted by the obſervation and experience of mankind in all ages, that men do not always govern themſelves by reaſon; but, for the moſt part, live in the tranſgreſſion of its laws. And the inſpired writer tells us of the heathen world in general, that they *held the truth* (the knowledge of the truth perceivable by the light of nature, relating to the being and perfections of God, his worſhip and ſervice) *in unrighteouſneſs*.* They hold the truth a priſoner, being ſuppreſs'd and reſtrained from exerting its influence by overbearing corrupt paſſions, and unrighteous practices; and further adds, that *when* they knew God, they glorified him not as God, ‡ &c.

Now if we enquire into the reaſon, whence is this? To what cauſe is this ſo great and general defect owing?---In the *firſt* place, may we not, muſt we not, impute it to the univerſal degeneracy of the human nature from its primitive rectitude? This, beſure, is the prime doctrine of ſacred writ (fundamental to the whole ſyſtem of ſcripture revelation) which teſtifies, in the language of the *Pſalmiſt*, that when *the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to*

* Rom. i. 18. ‡ Ver. 21.

ſee if there were any that did underſtand, and ſeek God, "the unpleaſing proſpect" that preſented itſelf to his eye was, that *all are gone aſide—— there is none that doeth good.**—The great apoſtle alledging this paſſage in proof of this univerſal defection, interprets it in the words of *Elihu*, in the text; *there is none that underſtandeth, there is none that ſeeketh after God.*† And does not nature and experience bear witneſs hereunto? for whence is it that reaſon, which is quick-ſighted, and penetrating enough in matters which lye within its ſphere, is ſo dull and ſtupid in the things of God and religion? Whence is it, that the great maſters of wiſdom, who flouriſhed about the age of the apoſtles, who were ſo well ſkilled in matters of humane ſcience, in philoſophy, oratory, poetry, and hiſtory, that they are ſet forth as patterns to following ages, even to this day, ſhould be ſo ſtrangely bewildered in their notions concerning God, and his worſhip, that the great doctor of the Gentiles ſcruples not to cenſure them as fools, (and he had, we doubt not, good evidence to ſupport his cenſure) ſaying, that *profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man,* &c. *and worſhipped, and ſerved the creature more than the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever.* Whence is this, I ſay? An horrid averſion and alienation of mind and heart from God, is aſſigned as the cauſe, *They did not like to retain God in their knowledge.* ‡ Which

* Pſal. xiv. 2 3. † Rom. iii. 11 ‡ Rom. i. 22, 23, 25, 28.

Which alienation from God, the fountain of life and being, of light and of all bleſſedneſs, is expreſſive of the wretchedneſs and miſery, as well as of the ſinfulneſs, of the condition of apoſtate man.

I WOULD only add, that the preſent diſorder'd ſtate of the human nature, ſpeaks a defection from it primitive ſtate; for no rational man who has juſt ideas of the divine perfections, can ſuppoſe, that ſuch an inconſiſtent piece of workmanſhip, as man now appears to be, could be the immediate product of an infinitely wiſe, and good creator, made up, (as it were) of contradictions, the paſſions, and faculties of his ſoul continually juſtling and jarring againſt each other. Reaſon induces us to believe what divine revelation aſſures us of, that *God made man upright*, * body and ſoul in a ſtate of perfection, every faculty in its right place and order, with an harmonious ſubordination of the inferior to the ſuperior leading faculties, the underſtanding and conſcience; but that it is far otherwiſe now with the generality of mankind, is a plain mark of degeneracy from their original integrity.

SECONDLY, 'TIS owing to mens inattention, and inconſideration: The not attending to right reaſon, as a rule of conduct, in preference to intereſt and paſſion, is the true cauſe of all or moſt of the errors and failures in the duties of common life, and it is much more ſo in matters

* Eccleſ. vii. 29.

matters of religion. Idolaters, particularly, are taxed with this ſtupidity, *They conſider not in their hearts*, ‡ (what one would think impoſſible for a being capable of thought and reflection, not to conſider) that none of the gods of which they themſelves were makers, could be *God* their *maker*. All irreligion and ungodlineſs hath its riſe from the ſame ſource, the neglect of calling up reaſon into exerciſe, and impartially attending its dictates. I ſhall only add,

THIRDLY, IT may be ſaid to proceed from the inſufficiency of natural light and reaſon, in the preſent degenerate ſtate of men, to recover them to a right conduct. If it be ſaid, tho' men have generally failed of their duty, and have gone out of the way, yet it is not fair to argue *fact*, and thence conclude the inſufficiency of the religion of nature or reaſon to ſet them right. *I anſwer*. Tho' there be other ways of proving the inſufficiency of natural religion to man degenerate, yet the ſolution of the caſe before us, as a queſtion of fact, will fairly infer the concluſion; for if it be true, if it may be fairly gathered from all the obſervations of mankind, that men have univerſally degenerated into impiety and vice, then they are fallen from the law of nature, and are condemned by it, and fallen under a moral diſorder; in this caſe natural religion can bring no remedy. This muſt come from another quarter: In many reſpects the inſufficiency of the religion of nature, to

† Iſai. xliv. 19.

to recover mankind from their degeneracy, and bring them back to God as their ſupream felicity might appear. I ſhall fix on one inſtance to our preſent purpoſe, that is, the duty of repentance. Both natural and revealed religion agree in requiring this duty of ſinners, it is certainly the duty of a meer heathen, who has no other light than that of nature, to repent of his ſins. The conviction he has done amiſs, and the remorſe he feels in his conſcience thereupon, teach him without any other monitor, he ought to repent, but here natural religion is defective, as it cannot furniſh a ſinner with ſufficient *aids* and *inducements* to repentance. The *aids* and aſſiſtances it may be ſuppoſed to adminiſter, muſt be from nature itſelf, but the diſtempered nature of a ſinner cannot heal itſelf by any power it is poſſeſſed of, the cure muſt be derived from a ſupernatural influence. The light and power of reaſon is too much darkned and debilitated (eſpecially being bribed by corrupt paſſions) to be able to throw off vicious cuſtoms, and alſo to root out evil inclinations and reform the heart, which is the work of true repentance: The only effectual relief and help in this caſe, is that which the goſpel of Chriſt propounds and offers, which is *the miniſtration of the Spirit.* If ſuch ſuper-natural influences be ſuppoſed to reach the minds of any bred up in heatheniſm, who never heard of the goſpel of Chriſt, it muſt be in an extraordinary method of vouchſafement quite unknown to us, and therefore unſafe to be aſſerted by us.

AND

And then, natural religion affords no ſufficient *inducements* to repentance, as it gives a ſinner no certain hope of pardon, if he does repent. The whole doctrine of redemption, and particularly that of atonement and ſatisfaction for ſin, in order to ſettle the conſcience of a ſinner in peace and ſecurity, againſt the fears of avenging juſtice, and the declarations and promiſes of forgiveneſs to the penitent, conſequent thereon, lie entirely out of its view, being the peculiar ſubject of the goſpel revelation. And though there are general intimations of mercy to mankind in the courſe of providence, yet the hopes of forgiveneſs founded thereon, are too weak and general to bear down ſtrong prejudices, and to break the force of inveterate cuſtoms of ſin and vice; and the important enquiry will ſtill recur to the inquiſitive mind, and anxious conſcience of a ſinner, *wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord?* —What ſhall I do to appeaſe offended juſtice? ſo that the mercies of God, in the courſe of common providence, are no argument of forgiveneſs; for he bears *with much long-ſuffering the veſſels of wrath.*

Now will a ſinner ever be induced to repent who has no certain hope or perſuaſion, that God will thereupon forgive him? It is not rational to ſuppoſe this; we might almoſt as reaſonably ſuppoſe our firſt parents to have repented in their deſpairing condition, immediately after their firſt tranſgreſſion, before any hopes were given them by the promiſe of the *ſeed of the woman*, as that

a ſinner might be expected to repent before, and without all hope of pardon, yet having once offended his maker, it is impoſſible, had he the underſtanding of a *ſeraphim*, that he ſhould know without a revelation, that he would pardon the offence upon any terms whatſoever. This is one of the things of God, which no man knoweth or can know, but the Spirit of God, who hath revealed it to us in the goſpel of his Son.

THUS we ſee in this inſtance, the deficiency of the religion of nature and reaſon, as a guide to man's duty and happineſs in his fallen ſtate. This is not meant to throw the leaſt diſparagement on natural religion, the excellencies whereof have been in part reported; but to ſhew the neceſſity of revealed, that the former might more effectually reach its end. There is an agreeable harmony between both natural and revealed religion, they both befriend and ſupport each other, and receive light and confirmation from each other. Without the principles of natural religion being laid as the foundation, we are uncapable of receiving any revelation from God; but theſe being laid, are of excellent uſe and advantage, in our purſuit of the ends of revelation.

I ſhall cloſe with a few inferences.

1. HENCE ſee our obligation to bleſs God for the gift of reaſon, which is ſome participation of the image of our maker, whereby we are made capable of high and glorious purpoſes; not only exalted to a rank in the creation of God ſuperior to beaſts, but little inferior to an-

gels, and by means of our intelligent nature, are capable of fellowſhip with them, in the knowledge and contemplation of the perfections of our Creator, and in glorifying him by active ſervice and homage. Hereby we are alſo capacitated to be uſeful to our generation, and to attain happineſs for ourſelves, and to uſe the means requiſite thereunto, under the advantages of revelation. In giving us reaſon and underſtanding God has given us the richeſt talent, of more value than all external advantages; and in continuing to us the free and unclouded exerciſe of this faculty, even when deprived of other intereſts, he may be ſaid to *give ſongs in the night*, matter of ſolace to ourſelves, and of thankſgiving and praiſe to our Creator, in the loweſt and darkeſt outward condition: If this *candle of the Lord* ſhine clear and bright within, it will open to us an inward ſpring of refreſhment and joy, for which we ſhall be obliged to be thankful to God.

2. We hence learn what great evil and guilt is contracted by counteracting our reaſon, or neglecting its dictates, by debaſing or abuſing it to ſerve the vile purpoſes of the fleſh, and by ſuffering ſenſe and appetite to get the dominion over it: This is to degrade ourſelves from our own ſpecies, unto a level with the beaſts that periſh, yea, we become worſe than they; they are irrational by nature, we by choice, and ſo aboliſh as far as in us lies the difference nature has put between man and beaſt. This highly diſhonors

diſhonors God, and provokes his wrath. When the apoſtle *Paul* had declared, the *wrath of God* was *revealed from heaven againſt all the ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*, he plainly intimates what was the moſt provoking thing to the wrath of God, in their ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs, by immediately ſubjoining, — *who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs.* † They ſmother'd and counter-acted the truths and precepts of the law of reaſon, which would have controul'd their vicious inclinations. This acting in defiance of reaſon is plain rebellion againſt God; as it is a trampling on the enſigns of his authority, which he has planted in the ſoul of man.

3. LET us hence ſee what cauſe we have to be peculiarly thankful for that divine revelation we enjoy. 'Tis owing to the improvements of revelation that our natural reaſon is ſo valuable a talent; its dimneſs brighten'd, its weakneſs ſtrengthen'd, its deficiencies abundantly and admirably ſupplied; without which, however uſeful on other accounts, yet with reſpect to life and happineſs, the main end of all religion would have left us to wander in the region and ſhadow of death. This is a privilege by which we are diſtinguiſh'd from the reſt of mankind; for as we are made to differ from brutes, and exalted above them, by reaſon, ſo we are made to differ from, and priviledg'd above the brutiſh people of the earth, (as the ignorant and idolatrous heathen are juſtly ſtiled) by revelation. Let us then be thankful for the light of reaſon, and peculi-

† Rom. i. 18.

arly ſo for the aſſiſtances afforded by the additional light of revelation; and forever adore, and thankfully improve, the diſcriminating grace of God towards us therein. Moreover,

SETTING aſide ſupernatural diſcoveries, revelation is of vaſt advantage to the bulk of mankind, with reſpect to moral duties, which it enjoins in the plaineſt manner—ſuited to the capacities of the vulgar, and in the fulleſt extent; which moral duties, moſt men by far (I might ſay it of all men in ſome degree) for want of ability, leiſure, or patience, would never be able to collect for themſelves out of the principles of natural reaſon, though deducible from them by the pains and ſtudies of philoſophers, and learned men. This merits our moſt grateful acknowledgment of the condeſcenſion of God, to the infirmities of mankind, in giving them ſuch a revelation.

4. LET us hence learn the obligations we are under as rational creatures, to make a due improvement of our reaſon for the right conduct of our lives. Men readily apprehend the neceſſity and uſefulneſs of their reaſon in all the affairs of civil life: But let us improve it to higher and nobler purpoſes, and be govern'd by its dictates in all duties of morality, in the ſeveral relations we ſuſtain among men, yea, and in matters of religion too, which is the higheſt and beſt improvement of our reaſon, and yet is not a thing that tranſcends reaſon; for God requires no more of us, than that we *ſhew ourſelves men*,* by acting

* Iſai. xlvi. 8.

acting up to the dignity of our reaſonable nature, and preſerving its dominion over corrupt affections, and paſſions; which if we do, eſpecially under the improvements of the chriſtian revelation, we cannot fail of being truly religious.

BUT of what uſe is reaſon in matters of pure revelation, which is ſupernatural, and tranſcends reaſon?

I SHALL anſwer in a few Words:

(1.) CONSIDERING the inſufficiency of the light and law of nature to guide mankind in this their fallen ſtate, to their great end, they being yet evidently in a ſtate of trial, under divine government; reaſon teaches, it is a thing worthy of God, and becoming his rectoral perfections, to give them a more perfect rule for that purpoſe, and to ſupply the defects of the natural law by revealing his mind and will to them, as a rule of government.

(2.) 'TIS the office of reaſon to examine the proofs and evidences both internal and external, which are offered to authenticate the revelation, as coming from God to us.

(3.) REASON is of great uſe in ſearching into, and helping us to underſtand the ſenſe and meaning of the revelation itſelf. And ſo a meer diſciplinary knowledge may be ſufficient to give a right explanation of the words of the revelation, both the language and ſenſe, though the *things* contained therein may need the illumination of the Spirit, in order to a right perception of them.

(4.) BEING

(4.) BEING ſatisfied in the ſufficiency, clearneſs and concluſiveneſs of the proofs and evidences of this revelation, reaſon teaches, we ought to receive it, to believe it, and ſubmit to it, as of divine authority, with as perfect acquieſcence of mind, as in the cleareſt dictates of natural light; tho' it contains things beyond the graſp of our reaſon, things ſeemingly incredible, and incomprehenſible to our frail intellects, yet being aſſured of the authenticneſs of the revelation, as coming from God, there is nothing in the world more rational than that we ſhould receive them as divine truths; or that reaſon ſhould ſubmit to faith, reſting on the authority and veracity of the divine revealer. He that contradicts this muſt be led to ſay, I will not believe what God ſpeaks to be true, becauſe I cannot comprehend it; which would be a bold affront to a mortal man: In this caſe, frail depraved reaſon is no competent judge of divine myſteries; both the principle and the object are ſuper-natural; the object, *the things of the Spirit*, or the things revealed by the Spirit; and the principle, a ſpiritual diſcerning; for want of which the meer natural man in his beſt improvements, is uncapable of a true perception of the things of the Spirit. *

5. WE ſee hence how vainly it is pretended, that chriſtianity is nothing elſe, but natural religion revived, with a few poſitive inſtitutions annexed. 'Tis readily granted that chriſtianity contains

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

contains the natural law reſtored to its greateſt purity; but to ſay, this is the whole of chriſtianity, is only to give a chriſtian name to deiſm, and to deny an atoningMediator to be a doctrine of chriſtianity. The chriſtian religion in the ſtrict and proper notion of it, may be conſidered as a ſcheme of divine diſpenſations, deſigned to reduce apoſtate man to the practice of natural religion, and to furniſh him with right principles for that purpoſe; as this latter is underſtood to import a ſyſtem of all the virtues requiſite and conducive to the perfection and happineſs of man's reaſonable nature: And in this ſtrict acceptation, chriſtianity is plainly diſtinct from natural religion. If indeed we had been a race of innocent beings, natural religion might have ſerved our turn, we had needed nothing more for ſecuring our final happineſs, than our continuing obedient to the precepts of it: But a ſinner needs a religion to teach him how to get reconciled to an offended God, before he can entertain the leaſt hope of happineſs. The religion of nature teaches him nothing of this: If you ſay, it is an article of natural religion, that we ought to repent of our ſins, and thereby reconcile ourſelves to God, after having offended him: This indeed, I know is ſaid; but upon what warrant? Perhaps, this is one of the refinements chriſtianity has made upon the religion of nature. But it is certain, the original law of nature knows nothing of a ſinner's repentance, but conſtantly ſuppoſes the perfect innocence of it's ſubject;

ſubject; nor ſpeaks a word of the method of a ſinner's reconciliation to an offended God.—(This I ſay of the *original law of nature*, allowing at the ſame time, that this natural law, as it hath place in the chriſtian ſcheme, tho' it requires perfect obedience, yet does not ſuppoſe the perfect innocence of its ſubject, becauſe it admits atonement for ſin, upon repentance, and faith in a redeemer.) Wherefore, let thoſe juſt men who need no repentance, ſit down contented with their natural religion, or their refinements upon it; every true chriſtian, who is conſcious to himſelf of his being a ſinner, will eſteem the revealed doctrine of a proper redemption, and of the perfect righteouſneſs and atonement of the redeemer, and of the remiſſion of ſins, and juſtification thro' faith in his blood, the very heart of chriſtianity, and will find the life of his ſoul in theſe things.

6. We hence alſo infer, that God expects duty and ſervice from men, in proportion to the degrees of knowledge and underſtanding he has given them. The inferior creatures have only ſenſe and inſtinct to guide them; and are not capable of a moral command: But men whom God hath taught more than the beaſts of the earth, being endued with rational capacities, from them he expects the ſervice of reaſonable creatures, in obedience to a moral law; and among men God has greater expectations of duty from chriſtians, in proportion to their greater privilege in having the light of revelation ſuper-

added

added to that of nature, than from unenlightned Pagans: And among chriſtians God expects more duty and ſervice from thoſe who are more peculiarly privileged with means of inſtruction; miniſters, ſcholars, and perſons of higher rank, who are favoured with ſingular advantages and opportunities for acquiring uſeful knowledge, than from the illiterate vulgar; and accordingly muſt their account be, agreable to that equitable maxim of our Saviour —*To whomſoever much is given, of them ſhall much be required.*†

And here, if I might be permitted to addreſs a word, agreable to the ſubject diſcourſed, to the ſtudents of this academy; (and ſurely it will not be deemed impertinent to the deſign of the pious founder of this lecture;) I would only ſay, as you have great advantages for cultivating and poliſhing your reaſonable powers by the liberal arts and ſciences, which may be of manifold uſe in all the affairs of life, eſpecially in matters of religion and morality; ſo it is to be hoped your improvements will be proportionable. And it may deſerve a ſerious thought, that your improvement or neglect of the ſpecial opportunities you enjoy in your learning age, for enriching your minds with the various kinds of uſeful literature, may furniſh matter of either comfortable or ſorrowful reflection to you, all your remaining days. Happy youths, under your preſent advantages, if you knew your own happineſs!

† Luke xii. 48.

TAKE care not only to ſtore your underſtandings with principles of truth for ſpeculation, but let them be reduced to practice, by influencing your affections and active powers, that your tempers and converſations may be governed by principles of truth and reaſon. This will be the beſt commendation of your learning. If you would be inſtructed in the art of pleaſing, or know how to behave, ſo as to be accepted of God, and approved of men, the beſt advice that can be given in general is, *ſhew yourſelves men*, behave as reaſonable creatures ought to do, both towards God, and towards men. Study the precepts of right reaſon, and aim at, and endeavour after a rational conduct in all your relations, towards your ſuperiors, equals, and inferiors: Such a rational conduct, (as it will yield abundant ſatisfaction and pleaſure to yourſelves in reflection) will appear highly decorous, amiable, pleaſing, yea charming to all the ſons of wiſdom and virtue; and you will be furniſhed for acceptable ſervice to your generation, whether in church or common-wealth.

As to thoſe of you who may have a view to the ſacred miniſtry, let me recommend an impartial regard to truth, eſpecially to religious truth, in your ſtudies and diſquiſitions. Let nothing be admitted for truth, but what a rational judgment ſhall pronounce ſuch, upon ſolid convincing evidence. Guard againſt prejudices and prepoſſeſſions of every kind; againſt prejudices ariſing from education, intereſt or any corrupt

corrupt paſſion. Let no opinion be embraced as true and ſound, merely becauſe it is received by tradition from the fathers, without impartial examination. To *prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good and true,* is the counſel of inſpired ſcripture.* However, there may be, I confeſs, no ſmall danger of carrying this caution too far. Young men taught by precepts, but not ſufficiently by experience, thro' the vivacity of their temper, affectation of novelty, or an overweaning conceit of their abilities, as ſuperior to thoſe of their predeceſſors, or through a vain curioſity, or an humorous ſingularity, or the alurement of ſome plauſible, tho' falſe reaſonings in a favourite author, are many times prone too raſhly to throw off the principles of their education. Their ſprightly wits account it a dull buſineſs, and too tedious to hold on in the ſame old path, becauſe it is old, tho' it be the good and right way; and are apt to ſtrike out into ſome untried and untrodden path, till by a more grave and mature judgment, and ſounder experience, they be convinced of their error. Extremes are therefore to be avoided: Examine old principles as ſtrictly as poſſible; this we exhort, and urge you to, without all fear of the conſequences; being well aſſured, that the more deeply and thoroughly and impartially they are ſtudied and ſearched into, the more you will be confirmed in them; but caſt them not off, till it plainly appears they will not ſtand

* 1 Theſſ. v. 21.

the teſt of reaſon or ſcripture ; and whatever opinions will not abide this teſt, tho' men of learning and renown have been the abettors of them, reaſon warrants their abdication.—*Magis amica veritas.* As truth is always uniform and conſonant to itſelf, ſo errors are various and often oppoſite to each other, as well as to the truth ; there is therefore this further caution to be obſerved, that upon the diſcovery of the error of any particular opinion, you be not carried away thro' a ſpirit of oppoſition, into the other extreme, no leſs diſagreeable to truth, which is no uncommon thing among men; and ſo thro' averſion to error fall into error : And therefore a careful and diſpaſſionate examination of principles is requiſite to your being ſteadily fixed in the golden medium of truth. — Guard in like manner againſt prejudices ariſing from intereſt, and worldly advantages, whereby you may be in danger of being tempted to forſake the old paths, wherein your pious progenitors have walked. But having by due enquiry found out the truth, to the ſatisfaction of your own minds, ſtand ſtedfaſt and inflexible to all temptations.—*Buy the truth* (ſays *Solomon* ‡) buy it at any rate, whatever pains or ſtudy it coſt you ; *and ſell it not*, part not with it upon any terms, becauſe no exchange, no equivalent can be given for it : All ſecular intereſts, honours, preferments, power, or reputation, are of no weight in counter-ballance to truth ; therefore " hold faſt the form of ſound words. "

Now

‡ Prov. xxiii. 23.

Now tho' human inſtruction and diſcipline are a moſt valuable advantage, in order to form and prepare the mind for religion and virtue, " yet " ſhew I unto you a more excellent way." Reſt not in meer human teaching, though the beſt of the kind; but ſubmit your ſouls, with the meekneſs and humility of Jeſus Chriſt, to the teaching of the Spirit of God, " Who teacheth like him?"† eſpecially in thoſe doctrines and truths which are of his inſpiration, whoſe office it is to lead you into, and confirm you in the truth, and eſtabliſh you againſt error. Beg this gift, therefore, of the Father of lights, that he would irradiate and warm your hearts with the heavenly light of his Spirit, that with a better reliſh, and a better hope of ſucceſs, you may apply your minds to ſearch into, and underſtand divine myſteries, and receive the impreſſions of them on your own ſouls: In his *light we ſhall ſee light*; ſo that as you are the hopes of the preſent, you may, thro' divine grace, be the bleſſings of the next generation: that as the Jews were wont to call the ſons of their prieſts, who ſhould one day ſucceed them in the prieſtly office, *Pirchéi chehunnah*,* the flowers of the prieſthood; ſo we look upon our ſtudious and pious youths, the ſons of the prophets, as the flowers of the miniſtry: May God grant you to bloſſom and flouriſh in all divine and human literature, and in all virtuous and religious endowments, and in due

† Job xxxvi. 22.

* פרחי כהנה *Bux.* Lex. Hebr. et Chaldaic.

due time to bring forth ripe fruit in the ſervice and edification of the church of *Chriſt*.

FINALLY (to add no more) : Let us hence ſee the equity, the eaſineſs and pleaſantneſs of the religion of Jeſus Chriſt ; which, as to the practical part, is founded in the reaſon and nature of man, and ſo may in ſome ſenſe be ſaid to be natural, as being adapted to the principles of light and truth in his rational nature, tho' not to the inclinations and diſpoſitions of his carnal nature ; and what is natural muſt be eaſy and pleaſant :---And why ſhould not the ſervice of Chriſt be as pleaſant to its votaries, having their rational nature on its ſide, though it has corrupt paſſion and appetite againſt it, as the ſervice of ſin is to its votaries, having their carnal nature on its ſide, tho' it has reaſon and conſcience againſt it ; and much more ſo, as the manly pleaſures of religion and virtue vaſtly tranſcend the ſordid pleaſures of brutal appetite ? With good reaſon, therefore, has our bleſſed Saviour left us this recommendation of his religion, *my yoke is eaſy and my burden is light.*† And from the whole we ſee the folly, the unreaſonableneſs and brutiſhneſs of ſin and vice ; its diſagreableneſs to the nature of man as a rational creature, and its certain tendency to his ruin. And on the other hand, we ſee alſo the wiſdom of being truly religious, which is nothing elſe but giving free ſcope to reaſon and conſcience to exert themſelves ;

† Matt. xi. 30.

ſelves, under the directions of revelation, in the right government of our tempers and lives. And this is the true wiſdom of man, according to the ancient oracle, which ever has been, and ever will be, found of immutable verity, as long as man is man, to the end of the world. In *Job* 28. *ult. Unto man he ſaid, behold the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.*

THE END.

7 AP 64